

You all know that he served as president of a university, Governor, Senator, and Secretary of Education. I have watched firsthand as he has led the Senate's Committee on Health and Education. I don't know any person who has worked longer, harder, and more effectively for the well-being of America's children than LAMAR ALEXANDER.

His service extends, of course, beyond the children. As we have endured the COVID-19 pandemic, he has led the Senate as we have helped to guide and fund our national response. His healthcare expertise and his determination to keep each of us informed and involved has been invaluable.

While America's response to the pandemic may not have been exemplary, LAMAR ALEXANDER's leadership of the Senate's role has been superb. The speed at which we will have a vaccine is, in no small measure, a testament to his determination and vision.

But LAMAR is much more than a Senator. I have seen the devotion he has for his wife and family. I have watched him entertain rooms full of celebrating Republicans with his piano and singing. And I have experienced very personally the kindness and graciousness that have long characterized this man. He was the first Senator to come to meet me when I joined this body.

His impact on the Senate, on the State of Tennessee, and on the Nation extends well beyond his legislative accomplishments and leadership. His greatest impact has been that of his personal character. He is a man without guile. He is true to his conscience. He speaks and acts with truth and honesty. He cares about people and endeavors to help others. He is a genuine friend, as is evidenced by the many members of his team wearing plaid masks around this room.

He has used his talent and energy not to aggrandize himself but to serve. It could be said of LAMAR ALEXANDER that he is a great American of exemplary character. We are a better people because of LAMAR ALEXANDER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I think Mark Twain said, among many other things, that there is nothing more troubling than a great example. And, as we have had all of these speeches today, I felt less and less adequate as the speakers talked about the great things that LAMAR has done, the great things he stands for, the incredible character that defines his life and his work. It has been wonderful to be here and to see the appreciation that Senators have for somebody who is proud to be a Senator.

Not that often do you get to start a last speech in the Senate referring to somebody else's maiden speech over almost 50 years ago. But that kind of sense of the Senate, that sense of community, that split screen that LAMAR talked about with educators, where you do have the one screen where it ap-

pears that nobody can get along and get anything done—and, particularly in the Senate, you have this relatively small community of people, all of whom got here by figuring out, normally, how to get along with other people, as one of their attributes of getting to the Senate. And then you have rules in the Senate that require you to get along to get anything done. So you have that other screen that doesn't get nearly the attention. But when you do look at the accomplishments, even at a time of great frustration, those accomplishments have been significant, and so many of them have included LAMAR.

I knew LAMAR before I came to the Senate, but, particularly, the last 10 years of working with LAMAR in the Senate have been great for me, and the time that Abby and I have been able to spend with him and Honey have been great.

He says things in passing that really define the opportunity to be here in such a significant way. We have heard many of them today. There are others I think of often—one LAMAR told me not too long ago, when I was talking about how well our staffs work together. He said: Well, it always seemed to me that when the Senators obviously got along, the staff figures that out and they understand they are supposed to get along too.

LAMAR is blessed with a great staff. It will be interesting to see the new standard of having that other speech that so significantly talks about the staff and what the staff means. I have a great staff—many of us do—but when those staffs work together, as opposed to looking for reasons they shouldn't work together, things happen.

I remember LAMAR told me one day: They always remember the last thing you do.

And if that turns out to be the case, at least the last Senate year of Senator ALEXANDER has been extraordinary, as others have been.

But this year I had a chance, as the appropriating chairman of the committee that LAMAR is the authorizing chairman for—and, by the way, he also sits right beside me on the Appropriations Committee in most of our hearings when Senator SHELBY isn't able to be there, the chairman of our full committee. But in this last year, particularly from March on, we have done so many things together.

In March, April, May, June, there was almost never a day when we didn't have at least one call with somebody who is running a laboratory or someone at the FDA or someone who understood this investment arm we had, BARDA, that had been designed about 10 years earlier but never used as we have used it to bring the private sector and public sector together in partnership in a way that advances both tests and vaccines.

We would spend sometimes hours a day in a series of 30-minute phone calls, trying to put the pieces of this puzzle together. I remember one day we

were talking to someone at the White House, and the comment from his part of the conversation was knowing how many other conversations we had had that day.

If people had any idea how much the Senate and the two of you—he was saying at that moment—are committed to get things done, they would be surprised because that is a story that never gets told.

So much of the story of LAMAR—his work here and the good spirit he brings to that work—isn't told, but it is so very obvious, certainly for me.

One of the great gifts of my working life has been for LAMAR ALEXANDER to be such an important part of it for the last 10 years. I am grateful for it; I am grateful for him. I look forward to his continued friendship and advice.

I think Senator ALEXANDER, like many of us, is more of a next-chapter guy than a last-chapter guy. He is neither shy nor retiring. I expect him to continue to have great impact in his State and in our country. And, in my case, I hope he continues to have great impact in my life.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I spoke earlier about Senator ALEXANDER, but I would like to compliment my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This is a fine and rare moment of bipartisanship and support of somebody we all admire and respect.

NOMINATION OF ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS

Madam President, now back to regular Senate business—I would like to conclude my remarks from earlier this morning on Senate business, but first I want to mention that I just met with another of President-Elect Biden's exceptionally qualified slate of Cabinet nominees over video conference, and that was Alejandro Mayorkas for the Department of Homeland Security.

No one exemplifies the hope and promise of America better than Ali, an immigrant from Cuba who has risen to the highest echelons of public service in his adopted country. We had an excellent conversation about how to restore integrity and trust at DHS and how to make this into a department that is not just anti-immigrant but relishes the fact that immigrants are so important to the future of America.

Now I will note that in previous administrations, the Secretary of Homeland Security has been confirmed by the Senate on Inauguration Day for President Obama and for President Trump. The Senate should continue the tradition and quickly confirm Ali Mayorkas for the third time so that he can get to work on day one of the Biden administration.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now, on Senate business, before the end of the year, the Senate has three major priorities: Fund the government; pass the annual Defense bill; and deliver another round of significant COVID relief.